adopted a multi-pronged approach, which includes, *inter alia,* funding by the Central Ministries, the North Eastern Council, the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources and the State Plans. The resource flow varies from year to year.

As per data compiled by the Central Statistical Organization it is seen that the North-East States have shown a steady improvement in the State Domestic Product over the years. The steps taken to attract more investments into the region include the incentives announced under the North East Industrial Policy (NEIP), 1997; creation of infrastructure'under the Assistance to States for Development of Export.Infrastructure and Allied Activities (ASIDE) scheme by the Ministry of Commerce, organization of two North East Business Summits at Mumbai and Delhi in 2002 and 2004 respectively. The third North East Business Summit is scheduled during April, 2007.

Plan to improve the North Eastern Region's transport infrastructure

2444. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Government plan to improve the North Eastern Region's transport infrastructure by according top priority to the construction of three Greenfield airports in Sikkim, Arunachal pradesh and Nagaland and conversion of the arterial network of railways in the region to the broad gauge;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Government plan to provide rail links to Meghalaya and Sikkim and connect all State capitals with air and four-or-two-lane national highways; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-EASTERN REGION (SHRI MANISHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. It is intended to give high priority in the Eleventh Plan to the improvement of the transport infrastructure in the North Eastern Region, including civil aviation and roads. The Airport Authority of India have prepared the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for a greenfield airport at Pakyong near Gangtok, Sikkim. The pre-feasbility reports in respect of the greenfield airports at Krsingsa near

Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh and Chiethu near Kohima in Nagaland are under preparation. The North Eastern Council have set up a committee under the Chairmanship of Governor, Manipur (who is a former Civil Aviation Secretary) to examine proposals to airlink all capital cities of the eight North Eastern States.

High priority is also being accorded to converting the arterial network of the Railways to broad gauge. The Ministry of Railways have also initiated proposals for providing rail links to Meghalaya and Sikkim.

The Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways is undertaking the Special Accelerated Road Development Project for the North East (SARDPNE) which includes connection of all State capitals with four-or-two lane roads.

At its last meeting in New Delhi in November, 2006, the North Eastern Council decided to hold special sectoral seminars with all stakeholders on transport infrastructure in which the Governors/Chief Ministers of all eight North Eastern States are being invited. Accordingly, under the Chairmanship of Union DONER Minister, sectoral meetings have been sheduled as per the Statement. *(See* below)

Besides, Secretary, DONER would review road projects on a monthly basis with all concerned. Similar meetings will also be undertaken for other infrastructure sectors. It is well recognized as a matter of policy that infrastructure holds the key to the accelerated development of the North Eastern Region.

Statement

Scheduled dates of sectoral meetings with all stakeholders on transport infrastructure

SI. No.	Sector	City	Scheduled date
1	2	3	4
1.	Inland Waterways	Guwahati	February, 2007
2.	Road connectivity	Shillong	March, 2007
3.	Horticulture (including Floriculture, Medicinal Herbs, Aromatic Plants)	Gangtok	April, 2007
4.	Agriculture (including National Bamboo Mission)	Aizawl	May, 2007

1	2	3	4
5.	IT Enabling and Tele/Cyber Communications	Agartala	June, 2007
6.	Education and Sports	Imphal	July 2007
7.	Handlooms and Handicrafts	Dimapur	August, 2007
8.	Investment in industry; Public Private and PPP, including banking and credit and Externally Aided projects	Shillong	September, 2007
9.	Flood Control and Irrigation	Guwahati	October, 2007
10.	Forestry and Forest Produce	Tawang	November, 2007
11.	Health and Medical Education, Drinking Water Supply	Kohima	December, 2007
12.	Tourism, Art and Culture	Gangtok	January, 2008
13.	Rail Connectivity	Imphal	February, 2008
14.	Small Industries, Khadi, Village Industries	Agartala	March, 2008
15.	Food Processing	Aizawl	April, 2008

Arrest of Fishermen by Sri Lankan Army

2445. SHRIS.ANBALAGAN:
DR. K. MALAISAMY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether several fishermen of Indian origin alongwith their fishing boats have been taken into custody by Sri Lankan Navy while fishing in the sea near the Sri Lanka and Indian border;

(b) the number that have been taken to custody during the last five years and the number out of them that have been released and the status of the remaining fishermen taken to custody;

(c) the process and stage of action taken by Government of India for the release of these persons;

(d) whether there is any follow up in this regard; and

(e) if so, whether it has been adequate and effective?